

1 Samuel 1:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?

Analysis

Elkanah's questions reveal both genuine concern and incomplete understanding. His threefold inquiry addresses Hannah's tears, loss of appetite, and grieved heart. His final question, 'Am I not better to thee than ten sons?' shows tender affection but misses Hannah's deeper longing. Ten sons represented complete blessing (Ruth 4:15), so Elkanah claims his love should compensate fully. Yet human love, however genuine, cannot satisfy every longing. Only God can fill the deepest needs of the human heart, and sometimes He withholds lesser goods to drive us toward greater ones.

Historical Context

The rhetorical question format was common in ancient Near Eastern literature for expressing devotion. Elkanah's comparison to 'ten sons' uses the number of completeness to express the fullness of his love, similar to Ruth 4:15 where Ruth is praised as 'better than seven sons.'

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How can human love, though valuable, fail to satisfy our deepest spiritual longings?
2. What needs in your life can only be fulfilled by God rather than human relationships?

Interlinear Text

תַּבְכֵּה יְלֹמֶד מִתְּהִלָּה אִישׁ הָאָלֹקָן הַלְּה יְאַמְּרָה
Then said H0 Elkanah her husband to her Hannah H4100 why wepest H1058
H559 H511 H376 H2584 H4100 H1058

יְכֻנֵּה עַל מִתְּאֵל לֹא יְלֹמֶד
H4100 H3808 thou and why eatest H4100 grieved H3415
H398

לֹא תְּבַבֵּד רַבְבָּתְךָ אָנֹכִי בְּלֹא
thou not and why is thy heart H3808 H595 am not I better H2896 H0
H3824

בְּנִים: מַעֲשֵׂךְ הָ
to thee than ten sons
H6235 H1121

Additional Cross-References

Ruth 4:15 (Parallel theme): And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him.

Isaiah 54:6 (Parallel theme): For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.

Job 6:14 (Parallel theme): To him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend; but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty.

Psalms 43:4 (Parallel theme): Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.

John 20:13 (Parallel theme): And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

John 20:15 (Parallel theme): Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 (Parallel theme): Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.